

## **“NMCB 4 PERFORMS TACTICAL TRAINING”**

Story and photos by: JO1 Kate Roberts

**CAMP MITCHELL, ROTA, SPAIN --** A Kevlar helmet pokes through Charlie

Company's tent opening, letting in a shower of light and questions.

“What's the last message you received?” asked Lt. Deanna Carpenter urgently.

“Operation Red Zone has begun Ma'am,” said Builder 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Timothy Edgar.

“Excellent, that is exactly correct,” responded Lt. Carpenter, Assistant Operations Officer for U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FOUR (NMCB 4).

NMCB 4's Chiefs and Officers are participating in the first monthly Command Post Exercise (CPX) during this Seabee Battalion's six-month deployment here at Camp Mitchell, Rota, Spain.

“We are exercising Command and Control skills in a notional tactical environment,” said Lt. Carpenter, weaving her way through a small tent city. “Out here we're able to get away from a ‘comfortable mind set’, and really work on honing our contingency skills.”

This isn't hard for most Seabees to imagine, since a large detachment of NMCB 4 is currently located in Fallujah, Iraq, supporting the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF). During the Battalion's 2003 deployment, they also found themselves in Kuwait and then Iraq, building bridges and providing the I MEF with Camp Maintenance support.

Each tent hums with activity as the morning wears on. Chiefs meticulously plot-out convoy routes and question each other about the route details, attempting to leave

nothing to chance as ringing field phones and glowing lap top screens show a steady flow of information between Company tents and the Combat Operation Center (COC).

Communication is key during operations of this nature, and the Communications Department staff was kept busy checking phone and computer connections. Field phones sent message traffic back and forth with phone operators recording message traffic and passing it on to their Chain of Command.

Computers offered each CP a “chat room” environment where message traffic could flow freely at a real time pace.

“You hear that ‘bing’? That means a message just came in,” said Information System Technician Seaman Daniel Reyes, pointing to a glowing lap top screen.

“Message traffic sent this way is a little more reliable than the old phones and radios for many reasons. You get the message first-hand, there isn’t any voice distortion that makes taking message traffic difficult over phones and you can print the message instead of trying to read someone else’s hand writing.”

“These skills we are practicing are not simple. Interpreting a steady stream of data, and explaining it to others so everyone ends up on the same page is very difficult, but very important during contingency operations,” said Lt. Carpenter with the authority of someone who spent many days and nights in a COC during NMCB 4’s 2003 deployment to Iraq and Kuwait.

NMCB 4’s Khaki will be performing a CPX monthly, as Seabees E-6 and below participate in a monthly General Military Training (GMT) session that offers them practice in patrols, communication, convoys and other tactical training allowing Seabees of NMCB 4 to stay true to their motto, “we build, we fight.

Photo Caption:



CM3 Joseph Stone (left) and ENS Virginia Blocher, of NMCB 4, monitor computer message traffic in the Alfa Command Post during a CPX in Camp Mitchell, Rota Spain. (U.S. Navy photo by JO1 Kate Roberts, NMCB 4)



YNSN Cameron Kay, of NMCB 4, gets valuable communication training during a CPX held this month at Camp Mitchell, Rota, Spain. NMCB 4 is currently on a six-month deployment to Spain and has Details working in a variety of other countries. NMCB 4 is homeported in Port Hueneme, CA. (U.S. Navy photo by JO1 Kate Roberts, NMCB 4)



BUC(SCW) Steven Fox, of NMCB 4, plots a convoy route on a map overlay, during CPX training held by the Khaki of NMCB 4 to hone their tactical skills. (U.S. Navy photo by JO1 Kate Roberts, NMCB 4)